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P-Starnes, Richard  
Gardner, John

Major public opinion campaign planned

# Common Cause divided by Viet war

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Common Cause, the self-styled "citizens lobby" founded by John W. Gardner, has been split by a feud over the organization's policy toward the war in Indochina.

The schism came to light after an erstwhile Nixon administration national security official who is now a member of the Common Cause staff said yesterday he would head a major campaign to mobilize public opinion against President Nixon's policies in Southeast Asia.

Morton Halperin, 32, a former assistant to White House national security aide Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, said President Nixon's recent statements made it plain that the United States faced the danger of becoming mired in Southeast Asia indefinitely. He added:

"There is no longer any doubt what the President's policy is. He has never been for

unilateral withdrawal. He has been for mutual withdrawal. He made it unmistakably clear that U.S. withdrawal is conditioned on a political settlement, a cease-fire, and withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. I don't think he's coming out. I think he intends to keep a residual force in Vietnam indefinitely."

Mr. Halperin's statement quickly drew a sharp rejoinder from a Common Cause official who identified himself as Mr. Gardner's spokesman. Tom Mathews, who said he was the lobby's "special assistant for communications," bluntly asserted that Mr. Halperin "is not a spokesman for Common Cause."

Mr. Mathews said policy on the Indochina war had been the subject of much discussion at Common Cause during the past several weeks, and that a public announcement relating to it "will be made next week."

Until then, Mr. Mathews declared, "I can neither affirm nor deny that it coincides with what Halperin said."

Mr. Halperin, who quit Dr. Kissinger's staff with a blast at the invasion of Cambodia last spring, could not be reached for comment on Mr. Mathews' apparent repudiation of his statements to reporters. Neither could Mr. Gardner, who was reported to be in Hawaii.

Mr. Mathews said Common Cause's policy statement on the war would be approved by the organization's 40 directors, and that a poll of members taken last November indicated that ending the war was their prime concern.

Mr. Gardner, who served as secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Johnson administration, organized Common Cause last August after the highly touted National Urban Coalition he headed had fallen short of its announced purpose to reclaim the nation's decaying inner cities. Mr. Gardner asserted that Common Cause was not intended to be a new political party but instead a means of urging reform on existing parties.

"The preferred path is to revitalize those two parties and I think Common Cause can be the instrument," he said.